

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Chi Szeto
Alfonso Noyola
John Gutierrez
Dennis Anderson

Absent:

Commissioners

Chi Szeto

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Jim Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Acting Chair (Vice Chair) Noyola at 1:33 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Dennis Anderson, 5th District.

Roll Call

Seven (7) Commissioners were at the meeting during the roll call; a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Allman to accept the Minutes of January 3, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Leal; a roll call with unanimous consent, this item was approved.

Motion made by Commissioner Anderson to accept the Minutes of January 15, 2023, seconded by Commissioner Gutierrez; a roll call with unanimous consent, this item was approved.

Chairman's Report

Acting Chair (Vice Chair) Noyola stated that the notice of the meeting went out last week on February 8th. If you wish to subscribe, please send your email to info@mva.lacounty.gov. Every meeting is posted on the YouTube channel, "LA County Military and Veterans Affairs." Lastly, he stated that Chairman Szeto will be reaching out to each Commissioner to discuss their priorities for the year.

Public Comment

Annetta Sparks: No answer

Dan Ortiz, 1st District veteran: Stated the enemy is Metro. The name of the station should be the Pacific Branch/VA Hospital and that Westwood is all the way on the other side of the cemetery.

Robert Begland, 3rd District veteran: Stated it is inaccurate to suggest it's Westwood. The appropriate name should be the Pacific Branch/VA hospital. Encourages the County to issue strong guidance to Metro about the importance of reconsidering this in its proper historical significance. There are art spaces and there are civic spaces and he thinks that Metro has mistakenly conceived that this is only an art space.

Christine Barrie, 3rd District resident: President of the 1887 Fund. Her family is the direct descendants of Arcadia Bandini de Stearns Baker, who, along with Senator John Percival Jones donated the land in 1887 and in 1888 is when it was ratified by Congress. This land was part of the national home, which was started by Abraham Lincoln. It was the first national home West of the Rockies, and the only one that was a donation. This land was part of the national home, which was started by Abraham Lincoln. It was the first national home West of the Rockies, and the only one that was a donation. It held 4,000 veterans at one point. That's why she feels that the naming of the station Pacific Branch is appropriate. Westwood was built in 1929, developed by the James family, and was built as a village for UCLA and had nothing to do with this home.

Rodney Brown: No answer

Dan Hall, 3rd District veteran: Operation Inherent Resolve in Spartan Shield veteran, former Army captain, and Army aviator. He is here to comment on Agenda item number 8, proposed reforms for Metro Westwood VA hospital station. He joins the voices of many others urging Metro to reengage with Mr. Burke to ensure a proper engagement with the veteran community is done to allay concerns and the very real risk of re-traumatization. He urges Metro to reexamine its artist selection process. He hopes that Metro chooses to name this station the Pacific Branch station.

Abraham Bradshaw, 2nd District veteran: Navy veteran, an artist, and fierce supporter of the Metro and public transportation, because he uses it. He always gets out on the 20 bus at the VA stop and it is only veterans who use that stop or employees of the VA that use that stop. One argument he would like to discuss is if you work for the Metro, you should be forced to ride the Metro yourself because if you ride the Metro every day, you would not be happy with the work that they are doing. Absolutely, 100% it should be called the Pacific Branch, not Westwood.

Vice Chair Alfonso Noyola read Mr. Brian Heyman's, 4th District veterans written Public Comment into the record: "As a Vietnam War Era Veteran, Congressional Liaison for the American Legion, and Commissioner of Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, I fully support the resolution of the Veterans Advisory Commission with regard to the naming of the Metro Station near Westwood, as well as Metro Art in general and the artists and art in particular at the Station."

Richard Valdez: Stated the artist's concept or the murals be arrived by way of input from the veteran community. He arrived at his comments based on two significant parts of the recommendation number, item one and item five. He quoted Abraham Lincoln, "With public sentiment, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed."

Peter Bullen: No answer

Mathew Millen, 3rd District veteran: Vietnam veteran and firmly supports recommendation #2. Urges the Commission to pass it.

Tonya: No answer

Diego Garcia: No answer

Guest Speaker

Presentation by Raul Rodriguez, Deputy Director of Animal Care and Control, to talk about discounts and special programs that they have for veterans. The objective of doing this kind of foster program is so that veterans can regain critical social skills by engaging with others and their foster pets.

Mr. Raul Rodriguez provided a PowerPoint presentation on the two (2) programs that Animal Care and Control have available for veterans; A discounted pet license and free adoptions of dogs and cats for veterans.

To get the discounts, you must go in person or start the process online, but then supporting documents must be mailed in to get the discount. The department is working on upgrading its website to have a better presence by being more user-friendly and giving options to people to be able to complete their transactions fully. Then veterans will be able to apply for their veterans' discount on the licensing online. The process will be where they get to a point where they will have to submit or upload the proof that they need to resubmit, like California ID, California Driver's License, Veteran identification or veteran health ID card, a Department of Defense Issue Identification Card indicating either active duty or retired status from any branch of the US Armed forces. A valid driver's license or ID card from another state is also accepted, but it must denote veteran status. Once those documents are uploaded to the website and they will have, they will have to wait for an e-mail or confirmation that those documents were reviewed and approved. The discounted rate usually mirrors our senior discount rate for seniors, which is \$7.50.

The next program is the adoption fees waved apply to nearly 100% of the county and the cities that they service. This is for U.S. military veterans and active duty military personnel. The only requirement is to present proper identification so that the fee can be waived for the adoption. A California Driver's License, veteran identification or veteran health ID card, and a Department of Defense Issue Identification Card indicating either active duty or retired status from any branch of the US Armed forces. A valid driver's license or ID card from another state is also accepted, but it must denote veteran status. The ID or the DD214 form shows that this charge from the branch of any of the armed forces with a discharge type other than this honorable. This was recently implemented by the department. The law changed in 2019, so the department decided to go with full free adoption for the veterans that served in our service area.

There is a pilot that they are very interested in implementing and wanted to start in early 2020. They were proposing a partnership with our local Air Force Base in the Antelope Valley, which is the Edwards Air Force and work with the personnel who are transitioning into civilian life. The conversations were initiated with the Director of Community Readiness to introduce the foster pilot program during the transitional assistance sessions.

Raul Rodriguez stated that he is hoping for "foster failure" which means that if the veteran falls in love with the pet so much that they will not want to let the animal go and then that pet will stay in their forever home. Implementation of this program will help not only service members coming back to civilian life but help animals find new homes and help save lives.

Acting Chair (Vice Chair) Alfonso Noyola thanked Mr. Raul Rodriguez for presenting this program, very informative and very helpful for the veteran community.

Recommendation #2: Proposed Reforms for Metro "Westwood/VA Hospital" Station

Acting Chair (Vice Chair) Noyola gave an overview of Recommendation #2.

Motion made by Commissioner Allman to discuss the existing draft of Recommendation #2, seconded by Commissioner McFadden; a roll call with unanimous consent, this item was approved.

After review and discussion, Commissioner McFadden made a motion to accept the edits of the recommendation and submit it to the Board of Supervisors, seconded by Commissioner Jackson-Kelley; a roll call was taken with unanimous consent and it was approved.

Commissioner Allman volunteered to take the lead in gathering signatures from the body of the Commission.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner, Director, provided the following updates:

- Recognized MVA Staff for their hard work and dedication.
- Patriotic Hall is open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm and until 8 pm on Wednesday nights; will not continue late nights if foot traffic does not increase.
- Exploring renting out the building for events and open to collaboration.
- Seeking use for the kitchen; LA Trade Tech is no longer interested due to a state-of-the-art kitchen built in 2021.
- New hire for Administrative Services Division recently joined the team and we are interviewing for VCA I's and II's.
- Finalizing the MOU with Aging and Disabilities and another MOU with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation.
- Secured 15K of private funding from the Tilly Foundation to hire someone to evaluate services at Santa Clarita Vet Center.

Agenda Items that are Deferred for Future Meetings

1. Commission Services; Cross Commission Cooperation – Chi Szeto
2. CALVET; Pathway to Citizenship – Joe Leal
3. LA Community College District; Student Veteran Homelessness – Anthony Allman
4. VA; SSVF Rideshare Transportation – Joe Leal
5. LA County, Department of Public Social Services; In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) – Joe Leal
6. LA County Homeless Initiative; FY 22/23 Funding Strategies – Anthony Allman
7. Cope Notes; Veterans Mental Health – Chi Szeto
8. Patriots and Paws; Service Dogs – Chi Szeto

Good of the Order

Commissioner Leal recently toured Patriotic Hall and learned that there is a lot of history, specifically with military artifacts. He is prepping for a Welcome Home Event for Vietnam veterans; flyers will be distributed.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley participated in the Afro-American History program for the National Center for Minority Veterans, Department of Veterans Affairs. She received a letter from the National Office of the NAACP of her appointment to the Armed Services. A celebration of Jackie Robinson's birthday was held at Patriotic Hall.

Commissioner McFadden will be speaking to her alumni school, Loyola Marymount University. They are having a celebration for Black History Month for veteran alumni for making a contribution to the community.

Commissioner Allman shared that he also attended the VCOEB meeting and the VA announced the \$361 million in funding for the master plan. The money to fund this project came from the Pact Act \$922 million which is about 39% of that appropriation.

Commissioner Gutierrez encouraged the other Commissioners to get out and visit the exhibit.

Commissioner Anderson noted that he attended a Memorial Service for 97year old Carroll Ray Bierbauer, WW II, U.S. Navy veteran, who served on the USS Comfort Hospital ship in the Pacific. On Saturday, he will attend another Memorial Service for Louis E. Moore, WW II, U.S. Army Air Force veteran who was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal as a Chinese American.

The meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
February 15, 2023